

# Southern



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## Jerry Ray: Brother's innocence is

### still a crusade

Plans to appeal to MLK family as James Earl's health declines

**TARA MILLIGAN**

*News Editor*

Jerry Ray's hope that his brother, James Earl Ray, may some day be proven innocent and released from jail is fading along with the deteriorating health of the convicted assassin.

Ray, who was near death and emerged from a coma just a few weeks ago, is in dire need of a new liver, but it is unlikely that he will receive one.

However, Jerry Ray, who lives in Warren County's Smartt Station community,

has vowed to keep up the fight to clear his family's name and rewrite the nation's history books to show that his brother did not assassinate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis almost 30 years ago.

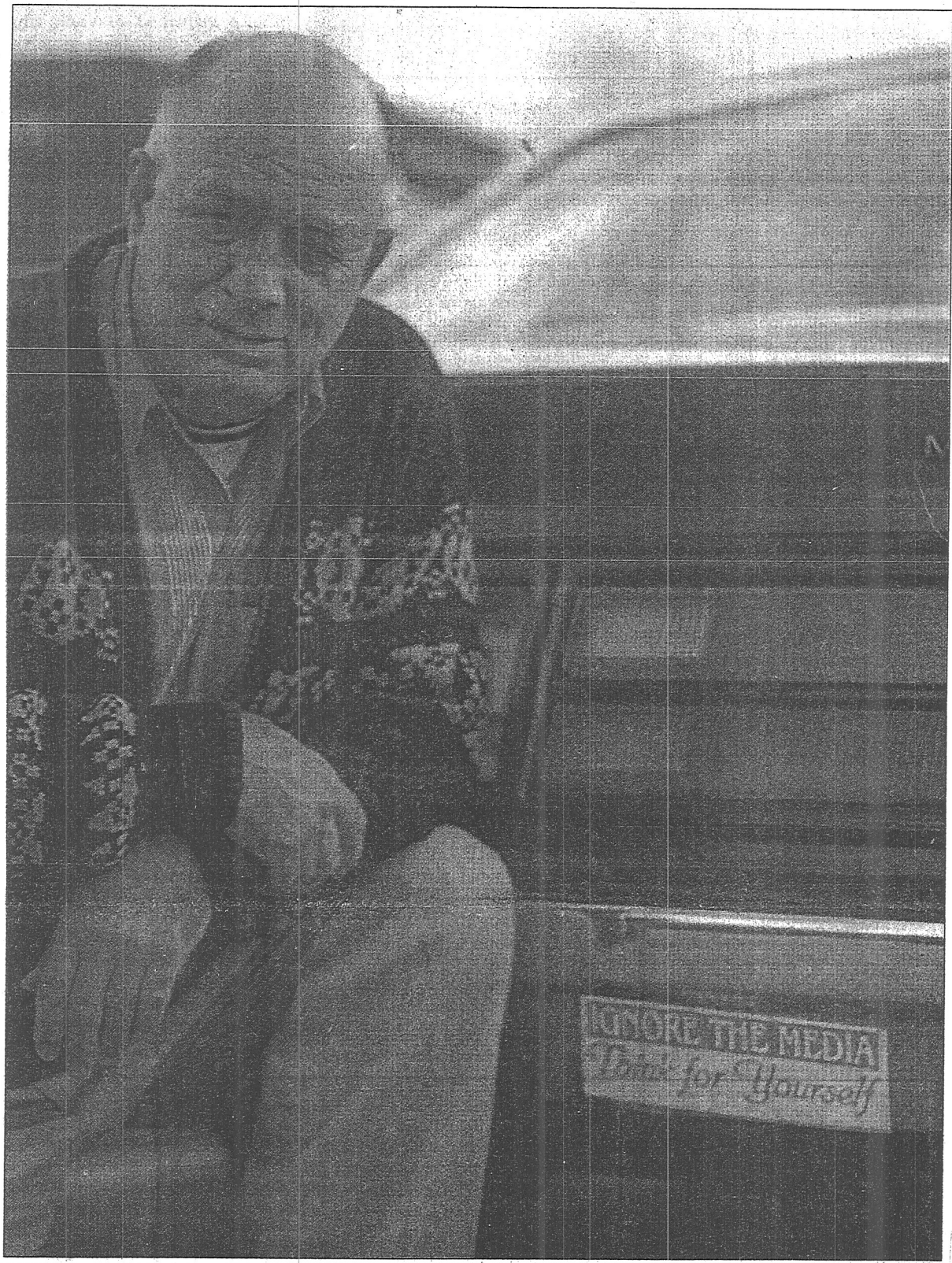
But Jerry admits that his efforts will be in vain if Ray dies before a Feb. 20 hearing on a motion for a new trial.

"Once you're dead, everything's dead," Jerry said. "If he dies now he'd go down in history as the man who killed King."

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Jennifer Lynn Beckett photo

Smartt Station resident Jerry Ray, the brother of James Earl Ray, the convicted assassin of Martin Luther King, discusses his latest effort to clear his brother's name.



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Time is limited. Doctors say it is only a matter of time before Ray goes into another coma and succumbs to his liver disease. And Jerry's mission has grown urgent.

Which is why Jerry said he has chosen to break a self-imposed silence toward the King family and publicly ask them to support the release of records pertaining to King's assassination and to support a new trial for his brother.

"We've never done this before," Jerry explained during an interview with the *South-ern Standard* this week. "Me and James always kept from

mentioning any of the family's names. We didn't want to have to put them on the spot so that they would have to take a position on anything.

"I've never mentioned them. We thought we'd be out of line if we brought them up."

But Jerry said he thinks the time has finally come to address the King family, and he said Martin Luther King would want the truth to be known as well.

"If King was looking down from heaven, he'd be sad that someone's in prison and going down in history for killing him when he didn't do it."

Jerry's life has revolved

around defending his brother, but at times Jerry has found himself embroiled in his brother's troubles. He has been accused of robbing banks in order to fund the assassination of King and threatening witnesses. None of the charges have ever been proven, and Jerry laughs them off as proof of a massive cover-up to hide the truth about King's murder.

Jerry subscribes to the point of view that Ray was framed for the murder, which he believes was a government conspiracy.

Jerry points out that Ray never has confessed to the murder. Ray did plead guilty to the charges, and because of that

plea he wasn't given a trial.

"He's never had a trial, and he didn't want to plead guilty," Jerry said.

Jerry believes that if Ray is given a new trial, the public would see that the only evidence against his brother is a gun that has never been tested.

"Once the judge hears all the evidence, he'll order a new trial. There'll be too much pressure," Jerry said. "This is the last chance, and we have to keep him alive until at least Feb. 20. Of course we're also hoping that he gets a new liver and lives for years to come."

Jerry is a suspicious and wary man who agreed to talk to a reporter in the most public of places — the mall, and whose car bears the bumper sticker "Ignore the Media: Think for Yourself."

And yet Jerry isn't shy to use the media to help his brother. He will make the public plea of King's family from the Montel Williams Show in about two weeks. Jerry said he has had requests for interviews from several television news magazine shows and other talk shows, but he agreed to do the Montel Williams Show only after he was told the producers would allow him to publish an 800 number dedicated to finding a liver donor for Ray.

Jerry said he has never doubted his brother's innocence.

"I never doubted it from the day it happened, and I know what he is, and I know what he's about, and there's no reason for him to do it."

When asked if he is interested in finding out the truth behind King's assassination or if he just wants to help his bro-

ther, Jerry explained that first and foremost he wants to help his family. But through his efforts, he said he believes the truth will be discovered.

Jerry said he continues to visit his brother at least once a week, and said Ray is hopeful about the future.

"He accepts it about dying, but he wants to live until that hearing. He knows that if he ever gets in court, they can't

convict him."

Jerry said he is anxious to hear from the King family regarding his request.

"I'm hoping they will support a new trial. I don't care if they think James did it. I just hope they support the trial, because if he gets a trial the whole truth is going to come out, and at least they'll know if he did it. If he's guilty like they claim, he'll be proven guilty."